

GUIDELINES

for Organizing Super Neighborhoods and Forming Super Neighborhood Councils

What is a super neighborhood?

The cornerstone of Mayor Lee P. Brown's neighborhood oriented government is problem solving on a manageable scale, which led to the creation of super neighborhoods - a geographic framework of 88 neighborhoods. The geographic boundaries of each super neighborhood use major physical features (bayous, freeways, etc.) to group together smaller contiguous communities that share common physical characteristics, identity or infrastructure.

Why do we need super neighborhoods?

In the past, residents of individual communities have focused their attention on issues that only affected their narrowly defined neighborhood, often a subdivision, without considering the conditions in the broader area surrounding their community. Super neighborhoods were created to encourage residents of neighboring communities to work together to identify, prioritize and

address the needs and concerns of the broader community. This creates a manageable framework for community action and allows the city to provide services more efficiently.

What is a super neighborhood council?

Residents and stakeholders (i.e., businesses, faith institutions, schools, etc.) of each super neighborhood will join ranks and form a super neighborhood council. The council will serve as a forum where residents and stakeholders can discuss issues impacting their super neighborhood, develop community improvement action plans and, ultimately, reach a consensus on high priority projects to improve the overall community. Your continued participation in your civic or homeowners association is essential to the success of the super neighborhood council. And, of course, citizens are always encouraged to access city government through city council members and other existing service channels (such as the Citizen's Assistance Office, etc.)



Why will neighborhoods want a super neighborhood council?

Super neighborhood councils create a new and innovative avenue for city government to become more responsive to concerns of Houston residents. The city will work with super neighborhood councils to address problems, ensure prompt, courteous and efficient delivery of city services, and focus attention on super neighborhood priorities for public infrastructure and other needed improvements. Once a super neighborhood council is created, a city-appointed neighborhood liaison will be assigned to work with the council.



What is a super neighborhood liaison?

A super neighborhood liaison is a city employee who will work with the newly formed super neighborhood council. The neighborhood liaison will help the council form a strong link between the neighborhood residents and city government by:

- communicating directly with key personnel in various city departments regarding the delivery of city services and other issues affecting the super neighborhood as a whole;
- assisting super neighborhood councils to finalize "Super Neighborhood Action Plans (SNAPs);
- working with city agency directors to ensure that SNAPs are successfully implemented in a timely manner.



How does a community form a super neighborhood council?

To be effective, the super neighborhood council must be representative of the largest possible number of residents and major stakeholders that comprise the entire super neighborhood. Furthermore, the council must provide a public forum for all to participate. To achieve this goal, residents of individual communities must collaborate with their neighbors on issues of concern. For some neighborhoods this may be a new and challenging experience.



How do we get organized?

The City's Planning and Development Department can help with organizational guidance and community outreach. The department is developing extensive profiles of the 88 super neighborhoods that provide useful historical, demographic and economic information. In addition, the department can provide technical assistance and facilitate meetings.



What happens next?

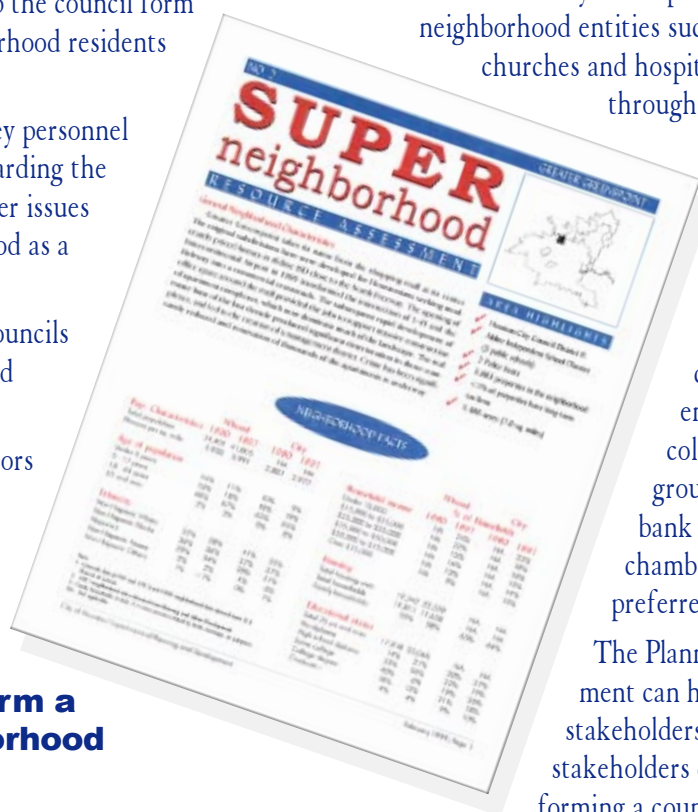
Mayor Brown and City Council members will recognize super neighborhood councils after the following:

1. Stakeholder Participation:

Stakeholders include groups like civic clubs, neighborhood block associations, non-profits, tenant associations, and community development corporations. Other neighborhood entities such as businesses, schools, churches and hospitals should be represented through their umbrella organizations

and coalitions rather than as single entities. Where there is no coalition organization, one could be formed and a representative elected to serve on the super neighborhood council. This will also encourage enhanced cooperation and collaboration between similar groups. For example, instead of a bank president, the chair of the local chamber of commerce would be preferred.

The Planning and Development Department can help you identify the major stakeholders in your community. Then the stakeholders can begin the process of forming a council. To be recognized as a super neighborhood council, you must demonstrate that identified stakeholders were given ample opportunity to participate and that no interested stakeholder was denied participation.



2. *Organizational Framework:*

The next step is to develop the organizational framework for the council. There are various forms of organizational structures. The council may choose simply to adopt “Articles of Association” with the approval of all participating entities. As others join, they too would agree to the Articles of Association. In a more structured approach stakeholders may agree to form a tax-exempt 501(c)(3), non-profit corporation or similar entity.

3. *By-Laws:*

After agreeing on an organizational framework, stakeholders will formulate and adopt by-laws. By-laws address fundamental issues on conducting business and making decisions. By-laws should address the following issues:

§ The right of any stakeholder within the super neighborhood to be represented, either through new or existing organizations.

§ The manner in which council seats and subsequent voting authority is assigned. One scenario might be that each stakeholder organization holds a seat on the council.

§ The manner in which super neighborhood council meetings will be conducted.

§ The method by which residents will participate in council activities and be informed of decisions.

§ The method for assuring that all council activity is conducted in open meetings where all residents may observe discussions and participate under defined circumstances.

§ A declaration assuring that participation is not limited by the imposition of membership requirements or fees either by the council or participating organizations.

§ A prohibition against exclusion of any individual or organization based on race, creed, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation or national origin from participating in super neighborhood council activities or serving as a council member.

4. Super Neighborhood Action Plan (SNAP):

Super neighborhoods and their councils create a broad-based neighborhood forum where residents and stakeholders meet to discuss issues affecting their community and develop action plans to address them. The ultimate goal is to create a Super Neighborhood Action Plan (SNAP).

Actions identified in the SNAP can be implemented through established city procedures such as the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), the Consolidated Plan, etc. The Planning and Development Department can assist in preparation of the SNAP.

PROCESS FLOW CHART

The process begins when you submit your completed Super Neighborhood Council Application.



Identify and elicit participation from stakeholders.



Agree on organizational framework for the council.



Formulate and adopt by-laws.



Develop a Super Neighborhood Action Plan (SNAP).

Liaison assists the Super Neighborhood Council implement items in their SNAP.



hat's the Next Step?

Ready to start organizing a super neighborhood council? Please complete the attached questionnaire and send it to:

City of Houston
Planning and Development Department
Attn: Robert M. Litke, Director
Post Office Box 1562
Houston, Texas 77251

If you have questions, please call or write:

City of Houston
Neighborhood Planning Services Division
Planning and Development Department
Attn: Matt Thibodeaux, Assistant Director
Post Office Box 1562
Houston, Texas 77251
Telephone: (713) 837-7701



SUPER NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL APPLICATION FORM

TO: City of Houston
Planning and Development Department
Attn: Robert M. Litke, Director
P.O. Box 1562
Houston, Texas 77251

DEAR MR. LITKE:

I / we are interested in forming a super neighborhood council in my / our community. Please have someone from your staff contact me / us regarding this request. Thank you.

APPLICANT INFORMATION: (Please provide the following information regarding the individual or organization):

APPLICANT: (Please enter the name of individual or organization filling out this application)

ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE:

MY NEIGHBORHOOD IS:

CONTACT: (Please identify the person the Department of Planning and Development should contact regarding this application):

NAME:

ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE: